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idiom. To speak of a chief is to mention before the end of the conversation his reputation for generosity or meanness in the giving of porridge and beer. To describe an attitude to any particular kinsman leads almost invariably to a comment, for instance, on the food in his granary, the number of relatives he supports, the share of meat he has asked for, or the amount of beer he contributed at the marriage of his daughter or the visit of an elder. In daily life the women, whether at work in the kitchen or sitting gossiping on their verandas at night, exchange interminable criticisms as to the way in which some particular dish of food has been divided, or the distribution of the four or five gourds of beer made at a brew. These casual observations of native life are significant. For us it requires a real effort of imagination to visualize a state of society in which food matters so much and from so many points of view, but this effort is necessary if we are to understand the emotional background of Bemba ideas as to diet.

The Perfect Meal.

To the Bemba each meal, to be satisfactory, must be composed of two constituents: a thick porridge (*ubwali*) made of millet and the relish (*umunani*) of vegetables, meat, or fish, which is eaten with it.

(*a*) *Ubwali. Ubwali* is made from coarse-ground flour[1] poured into boiling water, stirred until the mixture is stiff, and then kneaded and patted with a strong wooden blade—the Bemba spoon (*miko*)—and served in the open eating-baskets which the natives call *icipe* (plur. *ifipe*) in warm brown lumps that are round in shape. There is no comparable English dish. *Ubwali* is commonly translated by 'porridge' but this is misleading. The hot water and meal are mixed in proportion of 3 to 2 to make *ubwali* and this produces a solid mass of the consistency of plasticine and quite unlike what we know as porridge.[2] *Ubwali* is eaten in hunks torn off in the hand, rolled into balls, dipped in relish, and bolted whole.

Millet has already been described as the main constituent of Bemba diet, but it is difficult for the European, accustomed as he is to a large variety of foodstuffs, to realize fully what a 'staple crop' can mean to a primitive people. To the Bemba, millet porridge is

[1] Usually finger-millet, but *ubwali* may also be made with Kaffir-corn or cassava flour.

[2] The exact proportions in one sample (examined by Mrs. Gore-Browne) were—water 62 per cent. to flour 38 per cent. The word 'porridge' seems, however, preferable to 'mush' used in some Bantu grammars.

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locusts, ants, vegetables (wild and cultivated), mushrooms, &c.—prepared to eat with porridge. The functions of the relish are two: first to make the *ubwali* easier to swallow, and second to give it taste. A lump of porridge is glutinous and also gritty—the latter not only owing to the flour of which it is made, but to the extraneous matter mixed in with it on the grindstone. It needs a coating of something slippery to make it slide down the throat. Dipping the porridge in a liquid stew makes it easier to swallow. Thus the use of *umunani*, which to European eyes adds valuable constituents to the diet, is defended by the native on the ground that it overcomes the purely mechanical difficulty of getting the food down the throat. Some of the relishes are themselves difficult to swallow, in particular the wild forms of spinach (*umusalu*), which are stringy and often bitter. These the natives cook with ground-nut sauce (*ntwilo*) (cf. p. 95). To the European this seems to add a valuable constituent to the diet—fat—of which the supply is short in this area, but the Bemba himself explains that the sauce is not food. It is used to make the relish soft. It prevents the food 'coming back'. Meat and vegetable stews are cooked with salt whenever possible, and there is no doubt that an additional function of the relish in native eyes is to give the porridge taste and to lessen the monotony of the diet. Ground-nut sauce is also praised as bringing out the taste of a number of different relishes such as mushrooms, caterpillars, &c.

In general, only one relish is eaten at a meal. The Bemba do not like to mix their foods, and despise the European habit of eating a meal composed of two or three kinds of dishes. He calls this habit *ukusobelekanya* and one said, 'It is like a bird first to pick at this and then at that, or like a child who nibbles here and there through the day.'[1]

This habit of eating one relish at a time can probably be accounted for by the fact that there are few available choices of dish in any one day, and that the Bemba, with their traditional customs of hospitality, finish up all they cook. They do not keep a little bit of stew in a larder for to-morrow. It would be eaten by a passing relative. Nor do they plan several days' menu ahead

[1] But it is clear that the Bemba are not here implicating any modern dietetic theory, such as the principle advocated recently by Dr. Hay, that protein and starch should not be eaten together, for their favourite meal is porridge and meat.

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[Facing p. 90]

The Bemba hearth.
(Photograph posed in roofless house.)

Making a cooking-pot.

The finished pot set to dry before firing.

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as (*tunweno*, sing: *kunweno*) in which relish is also served. None of these pots can be covered during cooking, although the process of evaporation can be diminished slightly by covering the food with leaves in some cases. European saucepans are appreciated because they quicken cooking, but even these do not seem to be used with lids.

From a dietetic point of view a knowledge of native methods of cooking is of interest, since it should enable us to tell the extent to which the people either preserve or, alternatively, destroy the nutritive value of their foodstuffs by their methods of preservation, and also the variety in diet they are able to secure. To the sociologist cooking is a traditional art requiring more or less individual skill for its performance, learnt by a special educational mechanism, treated as an honoured calling or else as a menial task. It is also one activity of the many that go to make up the routine of the day or the month. Here it may be said at once that none of the Bemba methods of cooking appear very difficult to acquire or are governed by very precise rules as to quantities, &c. They are nearly all very lengthy however and require considerable energy and pains if they are to be successful. Domestic ability is admired and cooking is considered the centre of the woman's social life, but a comparison of Bemba cooking recipes with those of the Ngoni of Nyasaland or many of the Mashona peoples seems to show that the former are in some ways less ingenious in their use of the different foodstuffs available.

Porridge.

The preparation of porridge (*ukunayo bwali*) is obviously the most important task of the Bemba cook. Porridge is the essential element of any meal, and the time taken to cook it determines the whole routine of eating, and indirectly the tribal practices of hospitality.

To make the porridge, grain is threshed separately each day. The work is exhausting, and it is very rare for a housewife to grind a two days' supply. The millet heads must first be pounded (*ukutwa*) to free the fine grains from the stalks. The Bemba use high wooden mortars (*amabende*, sing: *libende*) from 2 to 3 feet high, in which they stamp the millet with stout poles about 3 feet long. Sometimes the woman stands to pound her grain, stamping rhythmically up and down with hands placed wide apart on the pestle. Sometimes she

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252 516 sits on a stool grasping the mortar with her legs. Another method is to pound the grain in a hollow in the ground. Two women then sit opposite each other with legs apart and pound alternately, singing to keep time. Each holds a flail with one hand, and with 252 a quick movement of the other sweeps fresh heads of millet into the hole in the ground. This last method is probably less efficient, but it is more companionable and preferred by young people. The pounding is exhausting work. The women's bodies steam in the sun and the village resounds with the regular thud of the flails.[1]

The grain has now to be sifted from the chaff (*ukuela*). Winnowing consists in sending the grain swirling with a circular motion of the big open basket (*ulupe*) which sends the chaff to the surface where it can be scooped off while the grain remains beneath. It is then pounded for a few moments again (*ukusokola*) and then winnowed again (*ukupunga*). The chaff is emptied on the garden beds around the village and to this the natives attribute the greater fertility of this land. (Cf. p. 281).

252 412 It now remains to grind the flour (*ukupela*). Against the wall of the veranda of each house is a small circular platform, about 9 inches from the ground, worn into a smooth groove with much [516] grinding. In front of this the woman kneels, and on it she places the handfuls of grain which she grinds beneath a small stone. This [533] task is reckoned very hard work and the women sing to lighten their labour. The rhythmic to-and-fro of the grinding stone, and the notes of a song, falling flatter and flatter, are the common sounds in a village in the late afternoon.

252 The flour so produced is of a coarse quality, and careful housewives sometimes grind it fresh before making the thin gruel (*umusunga*) with which a small baby is fed.[2] Some species of millet are distinguished as being easier to grind than others, and the flour is graded according to its whiteness, Kaffir-corn flour being the lightest.

To cook the porridge, the flour is merely tipped from the basket into water boiling in a big *inongo*. The process of gauging the

[1] The conception that the African woman is an overworked drudge is probably derived from the sight of the housewife threshing, but I must add that on the occasion when I was myself most overcome with pity at the sight of the women pounding millet I overheard this remark from one victim to another in reference to myself: 'I don't know how these white women stand it. I should think her neck must ache bent over her writing all the morning.'

[2] Vide, p. 69.

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right proportion of flour to water is apparently gained by experience, and no woman could give me a clear account of her reasons for measuring out what she did. To stir the porridge one of the big flat spoons (*miko*), about 2½ feet high, is first dipped in hot water, and then plunged into the seething mass of porridge. It must be held with two hands, the left at the top and the right near the blade, so that the heavy mass of porridge is moved with the whole weight of the body. This is arduous work and the interior of the porridge is sometimes hardly cooked, especially when a young girl cooks for large numbers. The process is complete in two or three minutes, and great lumps of *ubwali*, now brown and smooth and solid, are scraped off the *miko* into the eating baskets. Here they should be patted smooth with the stirrer into balls like plum puddings (*ukumeta*), a point on which the housewife prides herself.

The process of preparing maize flour is very different and reckoned by the Bemba as a troublesome one. The maize cobs must be pounded for long periods in a mortar before the grains become detached. They are then repounded and the product finally ground into flour with the grindstone. This is the ordinary method used by the women of most of the Nyasaland tribes and in Southern Rhodesia, who never seem to complain of the work. The fact that the Bemba are reluctant to use maize flour probably depends on a number of different factors, viz. their preference for porridge made of millet, the low yield of maize on this particular soil, and the unaccustomed nature of the work, rather than its inherent difficulty.

The preparation of cassava flour is a three- or four-day process and therefore alters the whole household routine. To make cassava flour the roots are dug from the beds as they are wanted and roughly peeled so that the shells come off, much of the vegetable being wasted by the Bemba in this way.[1] The inner part of the root must now be soaked. The bitter cassava contains, as is well known, hydrocyanic acid, but the natives do not apparently recognize the plant as being poisonous. Bemba say that some roots taste bitter, and that these are dangerous, but that it is one particular plant at fault, not the rest. Children are often given cassava to chew raw and no ill results are expected. In fact, among the neighbouring Bisa, unsoaked cassava (*kapango*) is sometimes

[1] Bisa scrape it more economically.

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252 [171] pounded and added to the flour made from soaked cassava (*bwabi*) and no evil results apparently follow.[1]

Cassava roots are put to soak in streams or rivers 'until they are soft', i.e. usually two days in hot weather and four days in cold. The roots are then taken home in baskets, chopped, and dried in the sun. After this the lumps of cassava must be pounded in mortars into flour.

This detailed account of the making of different types of flour has a certain practical importance. In any society, living on a subsistence level, the preparation of the staple food must determine the routine of the household. The baking of bread was once the most important activity in our own kitchens and the work of the week was organized round the baking days. It is obvious that the Bemba method of making millet porridge fixes cooking on a day-to-day basis, and these people only use cassava flour as an extra or substitute. But among the Bisa and other neighbouring tribes, cassava is the staple food and household routine is therefore fixed on a four- to six-day basis to allow of the soaking of the roots. Thus the cassava user must look ahead. She must always have some roots soaking, others drying, others being pounded into flour. She must calculate for the probable arrival of visitors. The Bemba cook is not used to planning ahead. No wonder she considers cassava flour unsatisfactory as a staple food.

Relishes.

The Bemba have a number of different ways of cooking relishes and these are listed at the end of the book (p. 406, Table A). As we have seen, the kitchen equipment of the native woman only permits her to boil or stew, and the different dishes used as relish, which she distinguishes with separate names, usually have the same composition but are stewed for a shorter or longer time, or with the addition of more or less water. *Ukuipika*, the word for

[1] Mr. T. S. L. Fox-Pitt tells me that the Balunda of Mwinilunga district, N. Rhodesia, recognize a poisonous variety of cassava, i.e. *mulunga*, and say that if roots taste bitter when raw it must not be eaten. Otherwise drunkenness, staggering, and then vomiting will result. Death follows if the man has not been able to vomit up enough of the poison. The Baunga of Luwinga district state that some wizards can bury a medium (*amakayi*) in the centre of a cassava garden and so produce withering and decay of limbs in those that eat the roots from that patch. The leaves of cassava are eaten by Bemba and Bisa and some cases of illness have been reported among the former as the result.

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'stew', is, in fact, the general term used for cooking. The chief methods used are the following:

1. *Stewing* (*ukuipika*). By this method the food is placed in cold water in an open earthenware vessel and left to simmer from three to six hours over the fire, with additional water added if necessary. Meat and fish are stewed till the flesh falls apart from the bone and a rich gravy (*umuto*), considered a great delicacy, has been formed. Green vegetables are also stewed, fresh peas and beans to form the dish known as *imifoba*, and also the green leaf relish, whether the wild spinaches or the cultivated plants such as cassava leaves, bean, cow-pea, pumpkin, &c., leaves, which form the very common Bemba dish known as *umusalu*. Gourds of different kinds are also boiled in water until they are soft, and sweet potatoes cooked similarly with broad leaves put to cover the pot so as to prevent evaporation. Maize cobs are also most commonly boiled (*kunwenena*).

Dried foods such as beans and peas are usually stewed four or five hours over a low fire until a sort of puree or paste is formed (*mintipu*), or the same dish may be dried still harder and patted into a solid cake known as *citata*, which is an unpopular kind of food only prepared in the hunger months when it is eaten in the absence of porridge.

2. *Stewing with ground-nut sauce* (*ukusashila*). The art of good cooking among the Bemba is to have sufficient ground-nut sauce (*ntwilo*) to add to other relishes to make them palatable. To make the sauce the nuts are pounded into shreds in a mortar (*ukutwila*) and these shreds constantly taken out in the hand and squeezed into a small bowl of water, so that the white oil from the nuts makes a milky fluid. The residue is then returned to the mortar and pounded again until the last drop of oil is extracted and a thickish cream results. The *ntwilo* is then ready for use. It is poured on to any cooked relish, and the whole stewed up again for a short time with the addition of salt. *Ntwilo* is thought to make meat or fish stews specially nice, and to be appetizing with stewed spinaches, locusts, or caterpillars, but with the tasteless dried leaf relishes and mushrooms it is considered almost essential. Hence the insistence of the Bemba cultivator that he must grow at least one patch of ground-nuts every season, although in actual practice he rarely succeeds in producing sufficient to last through the year.

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252 3. *Roasting* (*ukuoca*) *or dry cooking* (*ukusalula*). The Bemba have no real method of baking or roasting, but they occasionally cook foods in the ashes of open fires, and prepare sweet potatoes, maize cobs, or meat skewered on sticks in this way when on a journey. Another method of cooking is to put the food on an open potsherd over the fire with just sufficient water to prevent scorching (*ukusalula nkwangwa*). It is one of the few quick ways of preparing a relish. Fat meat is sometimes cooked in this manner, fresh green legume pods, ground-beans, ground-nuts, or dried spinaches softened with a little potash salt (*ifishikisa*). But this latter dish is only used as a last resource. Natives say it is so dry and hard 'You eat it and it goes crack, crack, crack in your mouth' (*mulelya muleti kwa kwa kwa!*).

263 4. *Seasoning*. It is interesting that salt, that scarce commodity, is only used for the most tasteless foods, i.e. spinaches, dried potatoes, or mushrooms (*fyafubulula*), the wild orchid (*cikanda*), and the dried cakes made of legumes (*citata*). It is also used to bring out the flavour of the ground-nut sauce. It is invariably added after the cooking. The use of a potash salt (*ifishikisa*) made from the bark of certain trees, to soften dried spinaches, is an interesting adaptation to the environment.

252 *Various fruits: Amankolobwe*. This is a little cucumber with a hard, wrinkled skin which is used either as a relish or to be eaten alone during the hunger months. It may be boiled whole and the contents sucked through a hole at one end, or it may be stewed until soft, pouring off the juice to make a hot drink 'just like tea'. Another way is to pull off the outer skins and to cook them with *ifishikisa* as a relish in the hunger months. The leaves provide an unpalatable relish and the seeds are sometimes used to make a sauce similar to the *ntwilo* made from ground-nuts, 'But', said a native, 'many people will never eat *amankolobwe*. It is only fit for a time of starvation. It is a thing to eat when a man is really hungry'—an interesting statement since this crop was evidently one of the earliest Bemba foods.

There are several wild fruits eaten by the Bemba. The chief varieties are the *mpundu*, the *masuku*, and the *umufungo*. These are eaten raw. In addition a sweet drink is made in the hot season by pounding both the *umpundu* and *umufungo* fruit with pestle and mortar, leaving the mixture to stand for about a quarter of an hour and then squeezing with the hands. This is known as *lumembwe*.

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The liquid can be used to cook gruel with millet or Kaffir-corn flour. *Umusuku* fruits can be squeezed with the hands to make a similar drink.

Beer-making.

The process of beer-making (*ukulongo bwalua*) is the longest and most skilled operation the Bemba housewife has to undertake. The brewing may take anything from four to seven days, and the varying temperature and moisture of the air affect its success, so that with the most experienced brewer there is always an element of luck. No housewife could give me exact instructions as to the quantities of grain used and the time taken, but was apparently guided by a judgement based on long experience, or as she herself would express it, with vigour: 'Young girls can't make beer. Only we elders know how to brew.'

The process can be best understood by a description of a concrete case. On this occasion two carrying baskets of unthreshed grain (about 80 lb.) were taken from a granary early in the morning and the whole quantity was threshed. This was heavy work and took most of the morning. In the evening the brewer lined a carrying basket with broad leaves and filled it with the threshed grain. She carried it down to the river and stood it in the shallow water near the bank. This is the ordinary method of starting germination in the grain, and baskets of millet may often be seen soaking in any small stream near to a village. It takes anything from 12 to 24 hours for the grain to begin to sprout, according to the heat of the weather. In this case the tiny shoots could be seen on each grain by midday on the following day, and the sprouted millet (known as *imimena*, from *ukumena*, to sprout) was then spread out flat on a sleeping mat (*ubutanda*) to dry in the sun. The drying must be complete and the beer may be spoilt if the weather is too damp at this stage.

The next stage consisted in the preparation of the yeast, the work of the third day. For this purpose a small portion of the *imimena* is ground into flour and placed at the bottom of a big water-pot. Boiling water is poured on top and the mixture is put aside to ferment. This is the process known as *ukushimpula*, and the thin sour gruel (*umusunga*) which results is left to stand until it begins to froth and bubble and finally to rise over the top of the pot. Temperature again affects the rate at which the

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Winnowing the grain.

Pounding the millet.

[facing p. 101]

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Water must also be fetched from the stream morning and evening (*ukutapa menshi*). A good housewife always has one or two *inongo* full of water standing to cool in her hut, and has warm water ready in the early morning for her husband to wash in, and for the baby's bath. No man ever draws for himself under village conditions, and the fetching of water is reckoned one of the essential duties of a wife.[1] The provision of drinking water for her husband is equally a woman's duty, and at a chief's court where old-fashioned ceremony is still observed, his wives kneel to offer him water in a gourd.

Besides collecting wood and water the woman has to provide relish, and this takes up much of her time at certain seasons of the year. During the rainy months regular expeditions are made daily to look for mushrooms. Women and girls go out with carrying baskets and line up across the bush, each picking what she finds. Such an expedition might take two or three hours. Wild spinaches have also to be looked for, and in the hot weather the girls are sent to gather *icikanda* orchids which grow in certain spots known to the natives, or the different wild fruits. Even when garden vegetables are available it may be necessary to walk two or three miles to a distant field to pick them. This is specially so when the gourds and pumpkins ripen, and it is reckoned that every other day the housewife must go out to her gardens to pick them (*ukusaba*) as they reach their prime. All these accessory activities have somehow to be fitted into the day besides the regular gardening and cooking.

The main processes of porridge making and cooking relish are themselves lengthy. The average time taken by seven women to thresh, winnow, and grind flour was 7·4 minutes a pound, and since about six pounds would be used daily by an ordinary family the time taken would be about three-quarters of an hour.[2] These women were, however, working uninterruptedly and knew they were being timed. An hour would be a more likely time under normal conditions. Different relishes take half to three-quarters

[1] A middle-aged widower and widow were discussing the possibility of marriage prosaically together. The would-be bridegroom said, 'Are you the kind of woman who always has hot water ready for her husband in the morning, and never grumbles when he asks for more?' The prospective bride answered, 'Yes, that is what I do. But are you the kind of man who gives his wife a new cloth occasionally and doesn't spend his money all on himself?'

[2] For note [2] see next page.

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of an hour to prepare,[1] and if vegetables are cooked with ground-nut sauce another three-quarters of an hour must be added, since the process described on pp. 91–3 is a lengthy one.

In all, then, two and a half hours would not be too high an estimate for the preparation of the evening meal, making the total three hours to allow for fetching wood and water.

Thus cooking and all its accessory activities form much the heaviest part of the domestic routine. They add two or three hours on to the day's agricultural work. Even under the old economic conditions this must have led to difficulties at the seasons when the women's gardening activities are particularly heavy, for instance, at harvest time in May or June or during August and September when the cut branches have to be piled for firing and at the same time relish is short and wild plants have to be hunted for. At present with the proportion of men absent the housewife is of course responsible for even more agricultural work and does some of the hoeing, for instance, that her husband would have undertaken. In these circumstances she seems to be definitely overworked at some months of the year—or rather she has to scamp either her gardening or her cooking. For this reason families which have not got young girls to help scour the bush for relish go short of food when the agricultural day has been heavy. An unexpected job like defending the crops against locusts throws out the routine of the day, or if beer is being brewed, there is little time for other work.

Thus here, as in industrial communities, there is the problem of the housewife who is too tired to cook. From the records analysed in pp. 178–83 it will be seen that during the month of

[2] *Seven Women timed in Kampamba Village (time in minutes)*

	Flour in lb.	*Threshing*	*Winnowing*	*Grinding*	*Total*	*Time per lb.*
1	4½	12	14	35	61	12·8
2	7½	10	13	30	53	7·4
3	11½	14	15	55	84	7·5
4	9½	10	15	42	67	7·2
5	12	8	12	45	65	5·4
6	12½	10	16	71	97	7·9
7	6	11	16	56	83	13·8

Average per lb.: 7·4 minutes

[1] Leaving out of account the dried legumes which have to be left to stew from four to six hours.

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September (1933) two out of four women were too tired to cook properly on three days out of twenty and one on four days. Most of the housewives in the village failed to cook on one day. In this case there was the apparently extraordinary situation of women with granaries full of food failing to prepare their families a proper meal. In this particular case four housewives, all elderly women, whom I observed particularly, seemed to succumb, apparently quite unnecessarily, to a kind of lethargy. Whether this was from insufficient food, too hard work the day previous, or an absence of relish to cook with their porridge I do not know, but these women sat still most of the morning talking or doing odd jobs in a desultory kind of way. In the evening they still had not started to grind. I asked, 'Why aren't you cooking?' They said with a shrug, 'There is no relish.' 'Why didn't you go and fetch some?' 'Hunger, Madam! Our strength has given out.' (*Nsala, Mukwai! Maka yapwa!*) They were, in fact, sitting hungry with millet in their granaries and relish to be found in the bush. This is the kind of situation that puzzles the European, who feels certain that with a little more effort the native woman could use her resources to better effect. As a matter of fact, her catering usually becomes less intelligent when she is hungry or exhausted, rather than more so. Necessity, in fact, is not the mother of invention where a shortage of food is concerned, and I have several times seen Bemba react to similar domestic difficulties with the same kind of coma of resignation, when it seemed to me, at any rate, that a little extra push of energy would have solved the problem. The explanation of such incidents is probably partly physiological, and partly also the fact, already stressed, that a people accustomed from infancy to an irregular diet do not feel sufficiently indignant or surprised at missing a proper meal to resist such an event energetically.

Such a break-down of the working arrangements of a Bemba family are rare, but it is a fact that the combination of domestic work with gardening and looking for relish is difficult at certain seasons of the year, and that the food-supply of different households tends to vary with the amount of labour available.

Education in Housecraft.

I never heard a small girl given definite instruction in any branch of housecraft. Children sit endlessly watching the different

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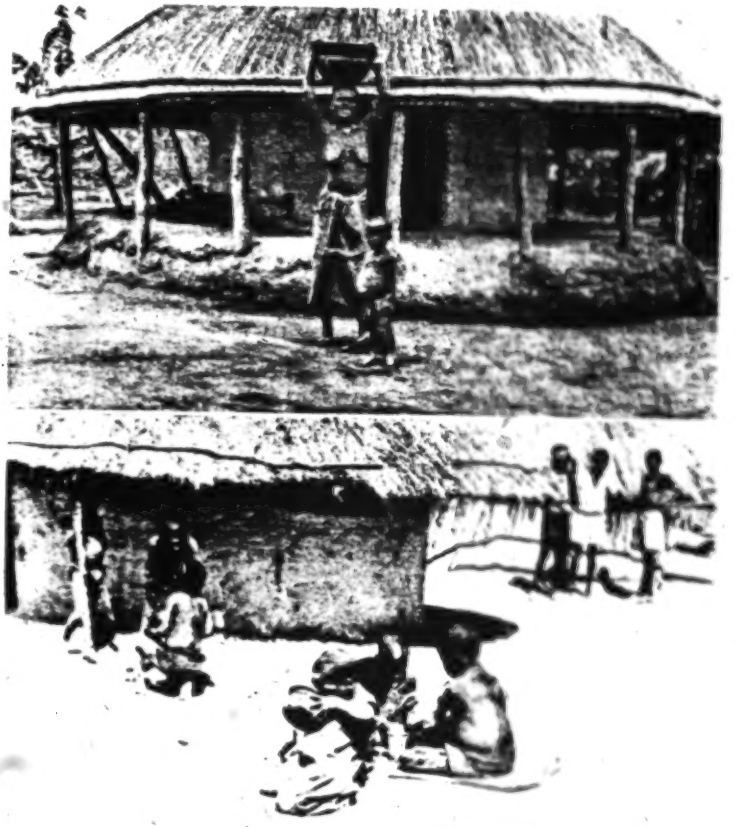

Fetching water for the kitchen.

First steps in cooking.

Grinding the daily flour.

[facing p. 106]

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place each night. Boys build houses for themselves in twos or threes.

Life is lived almost entirely in the open, on the verandas or on the ground in front of each house, and the doors are rarely closed by day. Each villager can see or hear most of what goes on next door in a community of an average size, i.e. of 30 to 50 huts. The Bemba even prepare their food as far as possible in the open—one of the most important sanctions for their particular system of distribution, as we shall see. Strolling through the village late in the afternoon the European will notice little groups of women and girls working together at different tasks. Two women may be grinding side by side at one grindstone, while others have carried their mortars to the door of the same hut and are pounding their grain in unison. On another veranda a group of young girls are shelling nuts, while the leaves for a vegetable stew are being cut and stalked by an older householder. Two grandmothers may be squatting by the fire stirring the porridge, while babies from various households are scrambling in and out of the hut on the lookout for tit-bits. Little girls between 8 and 12 belonging to different families come into the room to beg for something to cook on their own fires, and retire, laughing and talking, to miniature fire-places at the back of the veranda. Young matrons come in and out to borrow pots or a pinch of snuff—there is, in short a constant coming and going of women from hut to hut, while the boys and men of the different families are somewhere in the distance. Even the head of a household, returning from work, will not linger in his hut while cooking is in progress, but will stoop to enter the door, throw his spear silently on the bed and go off to wait elsewhere.

The division of the porridge each evening is an impressive sight in a big hut, and shows at a first glance that the catering far exceeds the limits of a single household. The housewife, probably an old woman, squats on the floor in front of the fire with four or five small eating-baskets beside her. From the great steaming pot on the hearth she takes lump after lump of porridge on the stirrer and slowly, appraisingly, scrapes off the right amount into each receptacle. A ring of younger women and children watch the spoon intently as it hovers a moment above each basket, and later descends to smooth each portion of *ubwali* into round balls. Next the relish is divided into a motley collection

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of dishes and enamel basins, and each is covered with a basket. Then the housewife hands them one by one to waiting children, saying, 'For X', 'For Z', and the little boys and girls hurry off to different huts or *nsaka* in the village carrying their loads on their heads.

During meal-times a different form of grouping displays itself. The unit of food preparation does not coincide exactly with the unit of consumption, although both exceed the limits of the individual family. The first division of the community at meal-times is along the lines of sex. Men and women eat separately. Even husband and wife never share a meal, except at night in the privacy of their own hut. It is considered shameful for the two sexes to eat together, and the Bemba women back from the mines who occasionally copy the European custom of joint meals, usually do so out of bravado, and are spoken of in bated breath. To say, 'She eats with men' is almost equivalent to calling a woman a prostitute in all but the urban areas, and the efforts of some educationalists to introduce family meals as part of 'Christian family life' have been hotly criticized by older natives.

This grouping of the sexes at meal-times is further subdivided on the basis of age, kinship, and friendship. Nobody eats alone. Each belongs to a set of his contemporaries who regularly share meals together. The grouping by age is not absolute, but is customary and follows the people's inclinations. In a small village it is usual for all the *bakalamba*—'big men'—to eat together at their own *nsaka* or to group together in turn on one of their respective verandas. In a larger settlement there may be two or three such groups of old men usually united by close ties of kinship. The young men eat at the village shelter where their food is regularly brought them. It may not be possible for all the young married men of a village to eat round one dish, for the in-law avoidances, still punctiliously observed among the Bemba, prevent a husband from feeding with any of his wife's relatives, real or classificatory. Hence it is customary to find round the village *nsaka* at least two groups—the young men born in the village and the outsiders who have come into the community to marry their sisters or cross-cousins. When the porridge arrives they form into two rings back to back round their own dishes. In larger villages there is a greater choice of possible associates, and personal friendship and geographical propinquity help to fix the choice. Even where the *nsaka* system

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CHAPTER VIII

THE DOMESTIC UNIT

Daughter Households.

252 614 IF the kinship of the women who regularly thresh and grind together be studied, it will be found that they mostly stand in the mother-daughter, grandmother-granddaughter or sister-sister relationship—that they are in fact the women of the matrilocal group. Among the Bemba, joint domestic activities are based on the kinship of the women householders, not that of the men as in patrilocal communities. These closely related women form a co-operating group—grandmother, mothers, and daughters with the 614 grandfather at their head. The young man who marries into the group is in fact almost an outsider during his first few years of wedded life and only gradually acquires economic control over his household, let alone the right of choice of residence, or power to 583 remove his children to his own village. The cattle handed over as *lobola* to the bride's father in South Africa are described as a permanent guarantee of the good behaviour of the married couple towards each other, but among the Bemba the bridegroom has to work for some years in a position of economic dependence in order to prove his worth as a husband or father at all, and during this time his wife can be removed if he fails to carry out his obligations. The bride and bridegroom at marriage have no food-supply [591] of their own. On his bethrothal a youth goes to live in his bride's village.[1] He cuts gardens for his father-in-law, directly under the latter's orders, and does any other work, such as hoeing, that may be required of him.[2] He builds himself his own hut, which his future bride, possibly a young girl of 10 or 12, sweeps and tidies for him, and in which she is later allowed to go and sleep until signs of approaching puberty make her mother afraid she

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[1] The following description applies to the system of marriage apparently practised before the coming of the white man, and still observed with certain modifications in the majority of cases. The changes caused by the introduction of money payments for service and by the absence of the young men at the mines will be discussed separately.

[2] Chiefly the tree-cutting preparatory to making millet gardens. A son-in-law always describes his own marriage as, 'I cut trees for him for so many years', and the money sent back to his father-in-law by a youth at the mines is called 'money for tree-cutting' (*ndalama shya kutema*)—now about 10*s*. a year.

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may become pregnant before her initiation ceremony (*icisungu*) has been performed. After this rite the marriage ceremony itself takes place, and the bride returns to her husband's hut.

During this period of betrothal and early marriage the bridegroom is fed by his mother-in-law who sends him dishes of cooked food, which he shares with the other young men in the village. If he has married within the family or village, the bride's mother does not consider herself entirely responsible for his food, but still sends him dishes when convenient. The wife meanwhile continues to eat with the women of her own family. After a time a bridegroom may choose to make a separate millet patch of his own as well as clearing the bush and working in his father-in-law's garden, but in either case his nutritive dependence is unchanged. At harvest the grain is carried to the granary of his wife's family and for some years after marriage he is not allowed to build a store of his own. His wife in the meantime is equally dependent on her mother's household. She is not even allowed a fire-place of her own, and is considered unfit to cook or handle her supplies. A young girl's hut has a fire, but no cooking supports for her pots, and she does all her household work as one of her mother's working team. About a year after the marriage ceremony the girl is 'given a fire-place' (*ukumupela shiko*) by her mother, and is allowed to cook in her own hut the flour ground in her mothers'.[1] Hereafter the mother will occasionally give her daughter a basket of millet to grind and cook for herself instead of sharing in the family supplies. It depends how much food is available on any one day, for it is recognized that it is more economical for people to eat together from the same dish. But to be given grain to grind herself, whether for beer or porridge, is a privilege highly appreciated. It is the bride's initial step of independence, for it gives her the right for the first time to distribute food or drink to her own and her husband's friends. As a next step, the son-in-law builds his own granary, if his wife is considered fit to take charge of the grain-supply. The young couple continue to rely on the parent household for additional support, and the wife still cooks and eats her food with her mother and sisters. Later the young married people, themselves probably parents by this time, become completely responsible for their own commissariat, although the woman, if she continues to live in her own village, carries her basket of millet to her mother's

[1] I never saw this ceremony performed, and have no full account of it.

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583 hut, and cooks and eats it there with her relatives and children.
●252 Delicacies such as meat, fish, or beer are divided between the houses. If the husband later removes his wife to his own village, the exchange of gifts and the visits of grandchildren still persist.

583 Thus in the old days the Bemba husband acquired sexual rights over his wife for five or six years before he could consider himself the economic head of his household, and even nowadays the period is normally two or three years. The power to allocate food and beer to his friends, the ambition of the young husband, is a privilege only gradually won.[1] Control over his children and the right to remove them and their mother to his own community, should he desire to do so, is achieved last of all. The bridegroom has in fact to change his position from being almost a stranger in his wife's village to one of considerable standing and even authority, when he comes to have married daughters and hence sons-in-law of his own. I have seen a young bridegroom stand sheepishly in the distance watching his wife laughing and talking with five of her female relatives on the veranda of her mother's hut. He was afraid to ask her to bring him water, scared by the sight of so many members of his wife's family all sitting together, and unable to join the group because of the in-law avoidance rules. Yet he would have been demeaned in Bemba eyes if he had gone to draw the water himself. Onlookers were much amused. 'Look he is afraid to call his wife,' they said, smiling, but made no offer to help. The position of a young son-in-law is in fact considered exceedingly funny, and Bemba delight to point out his embarrassing situation. Later in life, as the father of three or four married daughters with children, he has a very different status, and, if he choose to remain in his wife's village, he is accepted and honoured as one of the *bakalamba* of the community.

583 The husband's dependence on his wife's family is brought to an
606 end by definite stages. These are ceremonially marked and the assumption of behaviour proper to each is traditionally defined. The relationships between a man and his affinal relations are not left to the hazards of an informal process of adjustment and individual reaction as in our own society. On his betrothal the son-in-law receives a series of ritual presentations of different foodstuffs from his mother-in-law (*ukushikula*) which make him

[1] Cf. Chapters XI and XII for discussion on distribution and conceptions of wealth.

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I met two attractive sisters left unmarried long after the usual time and asked the reason. I was told, 'Their husbands come and live here a short time, and then they go. They say, "The mother is mean. She stints us of porridge. She gives us no respect." ' In the same way I have heard young men discussing the pros and cons of cross-cousin marriage and concluding, 'Cross-cousin marriage is not so good. Our aunts (*banyina senge*) do not give us as much respect as other women would. They do not send us food every day or cover the dishes elegantly.'

The importance of the offering of food to the son-in-law continues long after the wife has become an independent householder, cooking on her own. His mother-in-law continues to send him dishes. In fact, the offering of food by the woman to the man is one of the essential obligations of kinship and other social ties. It is part of the legal duty of a wife to cook porridge for her husband and to allow him a predominant share of it, and hence it becomes a privilege and a matter of pride. I noticed that young girls, recently betrothed, would intimate this fact by saying shyly: 'I have begun to cook for him.' Older married women will beg, borrow, or work for food to supply their husbands if their own granary is empty. Each wife in a polygamous household will cook for her husband even if she has insufficient for herself, so that a husband may get two or three dishes of porridge while a wife and her children may go short. I saw a second wife, whose garden had been destroyed by locusts, live with her three children for two days entirely on mushrooms, while the last remnants of her millet were ground up daily to provide a diminutive dish of porridge for her husband, the latter amply supplied by his more fortunate head-wife, who had so much surplus millet that she sat at the other end of the village brewing beer with it. To my question as to why the second wife did not keep her grain for herself and her children and leave the first to supply the husband, the reply was immediate: 'Because she hates her fellow wife.' The rivalry natural between co-wives was expressed in the competition over the provision of food. The Bemba woman's prestige largely rests on her power to provide porridge and relish for her male relatives and to serve it nicely. These are the dues a man expects from his mother-in-law, his wife, and a number of other women in his kinship group.

It is the *umucinshi*[1] that matters to both parties, as well as the filling of the belly. Hence the women in a village do not attempt

[1] [i.e., custom. – Analyst]

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264 to organize the supply of eating-baskets sent to the young men's shelter. There may be two one day and twelve another.[1] It does not matter. Every mother-in-law sends just whenever she has time and supplies, so that the men of the village have a varying amount to eat from day to day. The regularity of the diet is thus directly affected by the symbolic use of offerings of cooked food.

The Cooking Team.

252 476 602 We have turned for a moment from our main subject, the joint preparation of food, but it will be seen that the system of inter-dependent matrilocal households provides two units of economic co-operation, the women's and the men's. The former look for relish, fetch firewood, pound, grind, and cook together, and usually do their gardening work in twos and threes. The latter clear the bush for gardens jointly and, more rarely, hoe in common. But it is important to remember that the ties of kinship between the women's group are stronger than those between men. The women who work together are usually the old grandmother, her married daughter, her unmarried girls and adolescent granddaughters, besides other female relatives temporarily with her. The team may not be as large, of course. Every household in the village does not belong to a 'big house'. There may be only two or three individual families linked together, especially in a new village. But the basis of co-operation is the same in each case—mother and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, sister and sister,[2] &c., and it is the matrilocal family pattern which will be ultimately reproduced as a normal process of development. So much is this the case [595] that the wives of a polygamist never cook together, but each works with her own mother, sister, or any other female relatives who may happen to be in the village.[3] It is the solidarity and common activities of groups of the mother-daughter type which form the basis of the Bemba village. A man's own female relatives, his mother and sister, may be dependent on him, but they do not form part of the cooking unit. In-law taboos prevent a woman [606 607] from co-operating closely with her mother-in-law, and her relations with her sister-in-law are usually constrained, if not hostile.

[1] Cf. p. 183.

[2] Using these terms in the classificatory sense.

[3] The wives of a chief are often an exception in this respect. They seem to have accepted the status of polygamy more completely than the wives of commoners, and the heavy work involved in cooking for tribute labour makes it almost necessary for them to co-operate.

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A man helps his sister and her children by cutting them gardens or giving them uncooked food, but not by inviting them to share in the daily meals.

The men's group based on the matrilocal system is smaller and less closely knit. Between the sons-in-law attached to one household there is a feeling of close friendship and familiarity. These young men eat and work together, and the term *Ciufi munandi*, 'the man who married with me', or into the same family, is one of affection and good fellowship. There are no taboos between a man and his wife's sisters. He laughs and jokes with them because he may one day marry them, and he works in their gardens if they need help. But the young husbands often come from different villages and clans, and will want, as soon as they can, to have gardens of their own and perhaps to take their wives back to their villages. In the same way there may be co-operation from time to time between an old man and one of his own young kinsmen, such as his grandson or maternal nephew, but these also come and go, marry in other villages, and get work with Europeans. This group does not remain in close association throughout life as do the women of the matrilocal group, whether the latter remain in the same village or not.[1] This fact has important bearings at the present time. Though the unit of male labour is often non-existent, with the absence of so many of the men at the mines, the domestic and gardening economy of the women remains for the most part intact, and there seems no doubt that women deserted for months or even years by their husbands are more happily placed in a matrilocal community than in a patrilocal one.[2]

The Value of the Cooking Team.

The practical results of this type of domestic economics should be considered, since it is apparently one that is likely to change

[1] One legal case concerned a young married woman, one of six sisters, real or classificatory, who had lived in the same village and worked so happily together that when her husband removed her to his own village after the necessary years of service, she could not bear to live away from her family. The contrast between the cheerful female group in her own village and her relative isolation in her husband's community was too great. She ran back home for the third time during my stay at the village (Pambalasa, 1930). Divorce was the final result. Such a case is an extreme instance of the female solidarity which is so marked in a matrilocal tribe of this kind.

[2] Dr. Margaret Read confirms this on the basis of a comparative study between the patrilocal Ngoni and the matrilocal Chewa of Nyasaland.

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252 476 in the future. Is there any advantage, economic or otherwise, in this particular system of joint labour? To share food from the same dish is certainly more economical than preparing separate portions. There is always enough, the Bemba women say, if you eat out of one basket.[1] This is ensured by the custom of grouping of men and of women and children at meals.

Again, it must be recognized that joint housekeeping makes for greater security in a society with no system of exchange or purchase of food. To be attached to a 'big house' is to share its fortunes—to have the chance of delicacies like beer and meat as often as possible, and to be certain of support in case of a shortage. A comparison between conditions in a modern village where the kinship groups are smaller (p. 153) makes this clear. Where the unit of consumption is only one or two households the people may be better off at good seasons of the year but practically destitute in a bad one.

Joint cooking also eases the housewife's labour very largely. The younger women, in particular, like grinding and pounding together, and seem to work with greater enthusiasm in this way. The difficulties of combining lengthy cooking processes with gardening have already been described (Chap. VI and VIII). The woman with several young girls to help her may be able to work in her husband's fields and yet be able to provide relish for the evening meal. The isolated housewife may not, and the notes given on typical families (Chap. X) show this fact concretely.

252 476 869 Lastly, we saw that the Bemba system of education provides for no direct instruction in housecraft or a knowledge of the lore of the bush, but this information is acquired by a process of imitation through membership of a large group. Matrilocal marriage means that the girl is under the orders of her mother both before and after marriage for many years and thus learns the arts of organization, leadership, and the management of supplies by slow degrees. This seemed to me not the least important function of the matrilocal cooking team.

Domestic Economics in Modern Marriages.

583 591 178 The partial break-down of the matrilocal family system has had pronounced effects on the whole domestic economy of the Bemba.

[1] It will be seen (pp. 139, 41, 70) how housewives give their kinswomen grain to grind when food is plentiful, a small portion of flour when it is less so, and an invitation to share their dish when it is really scarce.

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APPENDIXES

TABLE A

Chief Bemba Foodstuffs and Methods of Preparation

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(The most common methods of preparation are preceded by an asterisk (*).)

English name	*Native term*		*Methods of preparation*	*Native term*
CEREALS				
1. *Finger millet* (Eleusine coracana)	*Amale*		1. *Flour made into porridge	*Ubwali.*
			2. *Flour made into thin gruel	*Umutenga.*
			3. *Flour made into beer	*Ubwalwa.*
			4. Flour made into a scone (for journeys only)	*Icifuba.*
2. *Kaffir corn*	*Amasaka*		1. *Flour made into porridge	*Ubwali.*
(a) Sorghum spp.	*Saalwe*		2. Flour made into beer	*Ubwalwa.*
	Kaacebele		3. Whole grains boiled	*Umasaka.*
(b) Saccharine	*Icisale*		1. Sweet stalks chewed	*Imise.*
3. *Maize* (Zea mays)	*Nyanje*		1. *Green maize boiled on cob	*Ukwemwena* (*ukya mitwetemina*).
			2. *Green maize roasted on cob	*Ukwoca mu mapepa.*
			3. Flour from green maize used for porridge	*Icinfumpa.*
			4. Flour from green maize used for beer (rare).	*Ubwalwa* (rare).
			5. Grains pounded and added to water. This milky fluid boiled. It sets into a 'blanc mange'	
			6. Dried grains boiled and pounded	*Icimbwa* (rare).
			7. Dried grains boiled only	*Umunbulalo* (rare).
			8. Very young corn boiled and eaten cob and all	*Sikya mwye.*
4. *Bulrush millet* (Pennisetum typhoideum)	*Ububele* (rare)		1. Ground into flour	
ROOT CROPS				
1. *Cassava* (Manihot utilissima)	*Kalundwe*		1. *Flour made into porridge	*Ubwali.*
			2. Roasted in chumbu and dipped in ground-nut sauce	
2. *Sweet potatoes* (Ipomoea batatas)	*Icumbu* (*plur.* *Ifyumbu*)	Eaten alone	1. *Boiled and eaten alone	*Ukwipika.*[1]
			2. *Roasted in ashes	*Ukufumbika.*
			3. *Dried potatoes (*ifyafubeleshiwa*) boiled with salt as relish	*Nsensa.*
3. *Livingstone potatoes*, Hausa or Finger (Coleus esculentus)	*Mumbu*	Eaten alone	1. *Boiled and eaten alone	*Ukwipika.*[1]
			2. *Stewed with ground-nut sauce	*Ukwambila*
PULSES				
1. *Ground-nuts* (Arachis hypogaea)	*Mbalala*	Relish	1. *Pounded into sauce to add to relishes	*Ntwile.*
		Relish	2. Ground-nuts ground and cooked into a cake and stamped hard with salt. Lasts two months. Used as relish	*Icikanda.*
			3. Nuts heated on a potsherd	*Ukunshila.*[2]
		Eaten alone	4. Ground-nuts eaten fresh	*Mantemfwe.*

[1] *Ukwipika* merely means to cook with water. [2] *Ukunshila* means to heat without water.

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English name	*Native term*		*Methods of preparation*	*Native term*
		Eaten alone	5. Nuts heated, pounded, cooked with water and pounded into a gruel	Umwemo.
			6. *Nuts heated, pounded, heated again until oil flows to top. Used to oil the skin	*Amafuta ya Mbalala.*
2. *Beans* (Phaseolus spp.)	*Icilumba*	Relish	1. *Fresh pods boiled without salt	*Icifyoba.*
		Relish	2. *Dried seeds stewed to form a purée—salt added	*Isaintipa.*
3. *Ground-bean* (Voandzeia subterranea)	*Ninya*	Relish	3. *Pods half dried and cooked with water	*Mwemayobo.*
4. *Cow-pea* (Vigna unguiculata)	*Ililemba*	Relish	4. *Fresh leaves stewed as relish with ground-nut sauce if possible	*Umwaala.*
5. *European pea* (Pisum Sativum)	*Nyanga*	Relish	5. *Dried leaves stewed with native soda, and ground-nut sauce if possible	*Umwaala.*
		Eaten alone	6. *Purée of stewed dried beans or peas pounded into a cake, and cooked when required with very little water and salt	*Isilota.*
		Eaten alone	7. Fresh peas or ground-beans cooked in pot without water	*Ukwalula ukwapwa.*
		Relish	8. Dried leaves softened with native soda cooked on pot-sherd with salt and water	*Ukwalula ukwapwa.*
CUCURBITS				
1. *Pumpkins* (Cucurbita spp.)	*Icipushi* (plur. *Ifipushi*)	Eaten alone	1. *Boiled and eaten alone	
		Relish	2. Seeds heated in pot as relish	*Nsoko.*
			3. *Fresh leaves stewed (cf. cassava leaves)	*Icilimalowa.*
2. *Edible gourds* (Lagenaria sp.)	*Mungu* (plur. *Myungu*)		1. *Boiled and eaten alone	
3. *Cucumbers*	*Icilumbi* (plur. *Ifilumbi*)		*Eaten raw	
(a) (Cucumis sativus)				
(b) Small cucumber (probably *Cucumis flexuosus*)	*Amashishi-lowe*	Eaten alone	1. *Boiled whole	
			2. Boiled to form a hot drink	
			3. Skins cooked with native soda	
MISCELLANEOUS				
1. *Chillies and Capsicums* (Capsicum annuum var.)	*Mpilipili*		Used as flavouring to relish	
2. *Solanaceous fruits* (Solanum nigrum)	*Mpwa*	Relish	Stewed as relish	*Ubujisha.*
UNCULTIVATED PLANTS				
1. *Wild spinaches* (not identified)	*Umusale*	Relish	1. *Fresh leaves stewed with ground-nut sauce and salt	*Ukwashila.*
	Many varieties including: *Papasa, Candolowaba, Lukakamba, Kapasha, Cimunshi, Tata, Cawala, Kakasa*		2. *Dried leaves stewed with native soda	*Ubujisha.*
2. *Wild orchid*, (Orchis mabembo?)	*Isikanda*	Relish	1. *Stewed with ground-nut sauce plus salt	*Isikanda.*
			2. Dried into a cake with salt	

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English name	Native term	Methods of preparation	Native term
3. *Edible fungi*, 30 kinds (cf. E. B. H. Goodall, op. cit., p. 110)	Bua Relish	1. Stewed with ground-nut sauce	Ubuumbila
	Relish	2. Stewed	Ubuipika
4. *Fruits*			Mukuia na.
(a) *Wild plums* (Anisophyllea sp.)	*Mfungo*	1. Eaten raw 2. *Made into a drink	Mfungo.
(b) *Loquats* (Uapaka Kirkiana)	*Several varieties: Masuku, Mapopo, Mukolola, Musukulwe*, &c.	1. Eaten raw 2. *Made into a drink	Ulumwalwe.
(c) *Mpundu fruit* (Parinarium mobola)	*Mpundu*	1. Eaten raw 2. *Made into a drink	
MEAT AND FISH			
1. *Game* (mostly buck, pig, wild pigeons, guinea-fowl, duck)	*Nama* (i.e. 'meat')	1. *Slow stewing 2. Roasted on sticks by fire (journey method) 3. Cooked dry on a potsherd	Ubuipika. Ubuumbila.
Chickens (domestic) short-legged = *Nkuku*	*Nkuku*	" "	"
2. *Fish* (cf. Report of C. K. Ricardo and R. T. Owen)	*Ifinshi* (plur. *amafinshi*)	1. *Slow stewing 2. Cooked dry on a potsherd	Ubuipika. Ubuumbila.
3. *Miscellaneous* Caterpillars	*Mabinsa*, 6 chief types: *Jojoomi, Mumpa, Nsenga, Namwandwa, Mpumbutu, Finda*	1. *Slow stewing with ground-nut sauce 2. Cooked dry	Ubuumbila. Ubuumbila.
Flying Ants	*Nkute*	" "	"
Locusts	*Amashemba*	" "	"
Crickets	*Nyenze*	" "	"
SALT			
1. Cibwe salt (for results on p. 410)	*Umunshi*	Used in cooking dried pulses, dried leaves, dishes cooked with ground-nut sauce, sweet potatoes, boiled	
2. Grass salt (not analysed)	"	" " "	
3. *Earth-pan salt*	"		
4. *Cooking soda* from bark of tree (not analysed)	*Ifubikisa*	Used for softening dried leaf relishes	

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The Ceremony

Each aimed carefully at the round mark on the wall, above his bride. The arrows quivered in the soft whitewash of the wall and stuck there. Each bridegroom then put his foot ceremonially on the head of the girl posed there and then laid his bow against the wall above her. The two of them went swaggering out while the women made excited comments. 'See, he has shot her! He has wounded her! He has got the mark.' It was evidently considered a romantic moment by the company, and indeed seemed so to a mere stranger. It was the climax of the night's ceremony. The girls had been given their *mbusa*. The secrets had been given up. Their husbands had come to claim them in marriage.

The rite ended with the opening of the firewood bundles by the girls with their teeth. Inside was the usual packet of domestic *mbusa*, the meat, the beads and the red dye. These were ceremonially offered to the *banacimungu* present and to the grandfather of one of the girls, brought in for the occasion.

It was now about half-past one at night. The excitement had fizzled out. Bickering and shouting began and the beer was served out. The smoke in the hut was thick. Women were streaming with sweat and the two girls lay exhausted on the floor. Nevertheless the drums and the singing went on sporadically throughout the rest of the night. I slipped out of the hut at about half-past two, no longer able to write. The company stayed, still watching for the dawn.

EIGHTEENTH DAY

The cocks of the dawn (*nkoko ya mesio*)

I was called just after 4 a.m. The first cock had crowed. It was the signal for the final rite of the killing of the chickens. The two birds were tied up with their heads held on the ground. The drums were beating urgently and the two girls were jogging up and down to time, sitting and rising, sitting and rising, banging the heads of the chickens each time. This is considered an important rite. 'Why, if she can't kill the chicken we shall know that she isn't grown up yet. We shall call her a *citengo* (an uninitiated person).' It takes a long time to kill birds this way.

After their heads and necks had been bruised and the fluttering ceased, the birds had to be plucked by the girls and scorched and

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[88] [252] then put to stew in water after the ordinary Bemba fashion of cooking chicken.

By now every cock in the village was crowing lustily and the women poured out of the hot smoky hut in to the bitter morning air of the cold season of the year. Everyone was drunk. Everyone was happy. Uncouth figures staggered round the village, like some satyr rout, laughing and singing:

'*Mr. Cock*
When you come, have gone,
Let us come and play.' (No. 36)

The words had a catchy tune, and the drum beat went at the rear of the laughing crowd. A few men came to their hut doors blinking sleepily. They looked on acidly as people do when they have been woken from their beds by other people's merriment. At last the noise died down and only the oldest of the *banacimbusa* still ran round the village gardens alone singing in a cracked, drunken voice:

'*You have slept with the chirungu child,*
You have slept with the lion.' (No. 37)

The communal eating of the chickens

At about eleven, we were called again to the initiation hut. A big pot of porridge was being made to be eaten with the ceremonial chickens. The paternal grandmother of one of the girls was in charge. She pretended to hand a spoon of porridge to each and then took it back. Then came the common Bemba rite known as [783] *ukulishya* by which those who have undergone a ceremony or kept taboos are made free to eat again with the rest of the community. Such people cannot touch food with their hands. They must be made free to do so. In this case, Nangoshye touched the girls' lips with the porridge and then made a big ball of it which each had to swallow whole. They were now free to eat with other people and join the ordinary life of the community again.

The porridge was then divided into three portions for the elders, the children and for the *banacimbusa*. Nangoshye carefully kept aside a wing of chicken for each girl and the rest of the stew was divided out as relish for the 25 or 30 women present.

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They learn to grind the millet and cook at a very early age
(See p. 126)

[facing p. 177]

Luapula Peoples

231 encouraged and there are now a few herds in the valley. Horses and mules are lacking. The donkey ridden by Gamitto when he made his entry in 1830 was the first of the species to be seen in the country.(1) The villagers keep poultry and some small stock, mainly goats and sheep.

FISHING

226 Fish abound in the Luapula, the riverside lagoons and Lakes Mweru and Mofwe. Livingstone collected the vernacular names of thirty-nine species caught in Lake Mweru.(2) Some fishing goes on all the year round but the season, when the men move to the fishing camps on the river islands, extends from September to January. In the shallow marshland pools the fish are speared while laying their eggs. In flowing water they are trapped in conical wickerwork baskets set in rocky falls or in the openings in a weir.(3) On Lake Mweru they are caught from canoes with hook and line. On the Luapula the people go out in their dugouts at night and drive the fish into seine-nets (*ubukonde*) by hitting the surface of the water with wooden discs attached to poles.(4) Large-scale fishing is done with
[177] drag-nets (*umdrom*) which require several men to pull them. Formerly nets were made by men from barkcloth cord. Nowadays nylon and cotton nets are
[278] used. Vegetable poisons and stupefacients, now banned, were employed in the past.

HUNTING

223 Hunting and fowling are spare-time activities. Elephants and buffa-
224 loes, which in Livingstone's time used to be chased into the Mofwe mudflats during the rainy season and killed in great numbers,(5) are no longer found in Kazembe's country though some still remain on the Belgian Congo side.
[411] Large herds of lechwe antelope roam the swamp country beyond the inhabited belt. Fire-arms have displaced the traditional weapons.

DIET

251 The basic foodstuffs are cassava(6) and fish. Game, poultry, fruit and wild bees' honey, supplement the diet. Cassava is soaked in water,
252 peeled and sun-dried for storing. The root, after being pounded and ground on a stone, is made into porridge and flavoured with groundnuts or other
262 relish. Sweet cassava is eaten roasted.(7) Fish is consumed fresh or
273 dried, game fresh or smoked. Fish, when dried in the sun or over a fire, will keep for three months. Water-lily roots, on which, according to tradition, the aboriginal pygmies fed, are considered a delicacy. Native-made alcoholic beverages were millet beer(8) (still made), *Borassus* palm wine, mead(9) and a spirit distilled from maize.(10) Oil is expressed from palm
276 fruit(11) and from groundnuts and vinegar used to be made from bananas.(12) Tobacco is taken as snuff and smoked in pipes.(13) *Bhang* (hemp), was

(1) Burton, op.cit., p.232.
(2) Livingstone, op.cit., p.245.
(3) Brelsford, 2, 1947, pp.70, 71.
(4) Holmes, 1935, p.26.
(5) Livingstone, op.cit., pp.248, 276, 299.
(6) Burton, op.cit., p.40.
(7) ibid., p.181.
(8) ibid., p.43.
(9) Gamitto, II, p.26; Valdez, II, p.266.
(10) Bowdich, p.91.
(11) Livingstone, op.cit., pp.243, 278.
(12) ibid, p.272.
(13) ibid., p.251; Gamitto, I, p.401.